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Winter 2024-25  
The Heart of Worship

**Sermon Title:** Learn, Love, Pray

**To be used with Session 6:** The Gathering for Worship

**Scripture:** Acts 2:42-43

**Connection with the Study:** To complement the study “The Gathering for Worship,” this sermon will lead believers to consider the truth that worship is more than just expressing our love for God. Although we are to be sincere in our praise and worship of our Savior, we are to be involved with others in specific ways, as well. In a world where skipping face-to-face worship services is made easy due to technology, believers must understand the value of gathering in person, which is the biblical model of true worship. Believers will be encouraged to examine their church and their hearts when compared to the first church in Jerusalem. In doing so, they may be prompted to adjust attitudes, attend worship more regularly, and encourage others to attend.

**Introduction:** The worship gathering is more than coming together to sing songs of praise and sit through an hour-long service. A true worship service is a gathering of the body of Christ. This body depends upon each member to help one another grow more Christlike. When we come together, we gather to worship God with every aspect of our being. We praise and honor God while we learn to live, love, and pray together as a family of believers.

As we study Acts 2:42-43, we will examine the first church. As we do so, let us also examine our church and our hearts.

## **1. We gather and learn (Acts 2:42).**

While today’s worship services include much music, which is a good thing, it also contains a central practice. The believers first continued steadfastly in learning doctrine from the apostles. Teaching is a vital part of worship. The sermon is a vital part of worship because it is in it that we learn the ways of God and how to apply them to our lives. When we hear and process a sermon, asking God to help us understand His Word and apply it, we are worshipping. We are placing His ways above ours by subjecting our will to His authority as found in Scripture.

This is best done together. We need each other. When left alone, a person may form false doctrines or fall into error. Worshipping together and hearing the Word rightly divided provides us with the opportunity to hear from one another and even correct one another if necessary. It is important to gather congregationally to praise God through singing praises, but it is also important to learn and apply proper doctrine. The gathering of a church is the best and proper way to worship.

## **2. We gather and love (Acts 2:42).**

Not only do we gather to worship, but a congregation also enjoys relationships with one another. This is called fellowship. Fellowship is vital to Christians. We need each other! We need encouragement, we need friendship, and we need support. The first believers were outcasts as far as the Jewish leaders were concerned. They relied upon one another in multiple ways. They “broke bread” together, taking common meals and partaking of the Lord’s Supper. Doing so united them in unique ways. Community was built and maintained by gathering and supporting one another while participating in fellowship and even worship through communion.

Today we gather for these, among other things, for fellowship. Fellowship is experienced through everything from meals with barbeque and pickles to recreation and pickleballs! The important thing is to learn to do life together, know one another, grow to love one another, and support one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. It is in the moments of fellowship that needs are revealed, friendships are formed, and church members truly become family.

## **3. We gather and pray (Acts 2:42-43).**

The first believers gathered to pray. In a world that was becoming more and more hostile to them, these Christians prayed for those who were suffering. They never hesitated to put feet to their prayers, meeting needs of the oppressed, but verse 43 helps us understand that God performed miracles. God heard their pleas and answered many of them in miraculous ways. He authenticated the truth of Jesus Christ through the signs and wonders He performed through the apostles.

Today we must gather for prayer. Prayer is powerful. Prayer is essential. When we gather and pray together, we are unified in our praise and requests to the Lord. Jesus prayed, the disciples prayed, and we are expected to pray. James described the need for prayer for the suffering, cheerful, and sick: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect” (James 5:16).

**Conclusion:** Learning together, loving one another, and praying together are three elements of worship that are often overlooked. Perhaps we should place more emphasis on the total worship experience. It is about blessing God and blessing one another. We must make worship a priority, placing God first, but leading one another toward Christlikeness. We tend to emphasize expressing our love to God and fail to recognize the community aspect of worship.

Bear with me for a moment as I speak directly. Friends, attend worship more often. Encourage missing members to come. Invite and bring the lost, those who need Jesus, to worship.

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